I CLAIM:

1. A station for a network apparatus comprising said station and a plurality of other stations, all interconnected by a communication link, said station comprising:

a network connection;

a self assessment module operable to determine a current status of said station, wherein said current status is a measure of said stations available resources;

a trust list that includes a station identifier for said or each other station which is designated as trusted to perform tasks for said station;

a broadcast unit operable to transmit service requests to said network connection and onto said network, said service requests being directed to said or each other station identified in said trust list and constituting a request to said or each other station to perform a task for said station; and

an answer unit operable to receive service requests from said network through said network connection and, in response thereto, to transmit to said network through said network connection an acceptance or refusal message in respect of said service request, said acceptance or refusal being decided having regard to said current status of said station, as determined by said self assessment module.

2. A station according to claim 1, wherein said self assessment module is operable to determine a static status for said station based on hardware resources of said station and a dynamic status for said station based on current usage of said hardware resources.

3. A station according to claim 1, further comprising a system security module operable to handle encryption between said station and said or each other trusted station.

4. A station according to claim 1, further comprising a task execution, monitoring and reporting module operable to broadcast to said network progress updates on tasks accepted by and being performed in said station on behalf of an other station.

5. A station according to claim 1, further comprising a task scheduler module arranged to monitor all tasks being performed in said station, including tasks initiated by said station for said station and tasks being performed in response to receipt of a service request from one of said other stations.

6. A station according to claim 1, further comprising a service requirement analysis module and a software resource repository in which a plurality of software modules are stored, said service requirement analysis module being operable to maintain said software resource repository by importing and exporting software modules to and from other stations having regard to demand in said station for such software modules.

7. A station according to claim 6, wherein said station is further operable to broadcast messages to said network offering software modules held in said software resource repository to said or each other trusted station.

8. A station according to claim 1, further comprising a service/performance history learning analysis module operable to apply artificial intelligence to find task bottlenecks in said station and said other stations, and to bring these to the attention of a network administrators if it can not solve them itself.

9. A station according to claim 1, further comprising a task failure management module, operable to transmit to said network a failure message in response to failure of said station successfully to complete a task being performed for one of said other stations.

10. A station according to claim 9, wherein said task failure management module is further operable to monitor for failure messages transmitted by one of its trusted stations and, in response thereto, to handle said failure message as a service request message for said failed task.

11. A network comprising a plurality of stations according to claim 1 interconnected by a communication link.

12. A network according to claim 11, wherein there is no central server for said network.

13. A network according to claim 11, wherein said network operates to a protocol that permits stations to be removed from and added to said network dynamically.

14. A method of distributing tasks in a network comprising a plurality of stations, all interconnected by respective network connections to a communication link, said method comprising:

transmitting a service request by a first station to its network connection and onto said network, said service request being directed to a trusted sub-group of said stations and specifying a task to be performed; and

receiving said service request by a second station, that is one of said trusted sub-group of stations, through its network connection and, in response thereto, transmitting to said network through its network connection an acceptance or refusal message in respect of said service request, said acceptance or refusal being decided having regard to said current status of said second station, as determined by a self assessment of said second station; and

carrying out said task specified in said service request by said second station and returning a service result to said first station.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein said carrying out of said service request by said second station involves further distribution of said service by transmitting further service requests to a sub-group of said stations trusted by said second station.

16. Computer software comprising program code means for carrying out a method according to claim 14.

17. A carrier medium carrying computer software according to claim 16.

18. A medium according to claim 17, the medium being a storage medium.

19. A medium according to claim 17, the medium being a transmission medium.